



Getting Along With Others: How to Be a Good Neighbor

Bottom line, being a good neighbor means not doing things that disturb others around you. But there are benefits to being a good neighbor, including increased security and comfort for everyone. Here are a few tips¹

Introduce yourself!

Introduce yourself to your nearest neighbors. Get off to a good start. Knowing people by name is always a good policy. Say hello and be friendly when you run into neighbors in the hallway, in common areas, or on the sidewalk. In times of difficulty, neighbors are often your first resource.

Follow the Golden Rule: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

This is always the best policy. It is hard to complain about neighbors if you are guilty of the same attitudes or behavior.

Maintain the area around your home so that it's neat and attractive.

Avoid lots of unsightly clutter, trash, or discarded objects in common areas such as hallways, yards, or around doorways. Safety is a concern (you don't want people tripping over things or trash drawing rodents), but so is the attractiveness of the area everyone shares.

Be considerate about noises that might disturb your neighbors, such as vacuum cleaners, music, loud talk and barking dogs.

The most common “neighbor problem” involves noise. In many communities people live close together; apartments often have thin walls. If you like loud music or television, get a good set of headphones and wear them.

Some people have dogs for protection from intruders, but barking all day or during the night is disruptive for everyone. If you have a dog, it is your responsibility to keep him/her from disturbing others.

Be thoughtful about when you vacuum or mow the lawn. Avoid these tasks before 9:00 a.m. or after 8:00 p.m. If you have a neighbor that works a night shift, talk together about the best time for each of you to take care of these chores.

¹ Adapted from: http://www.ehow.com/how_3428_be-neighbor.html and other sources.

If you are going to have friends over or have a party, make sure the noise is “off” by 10:00 p.m. If the party is just getting started at that time, consider taking the group out to a more public setting such as a restaurant or community area where the noise will not disturb others.

Respect privacy.

Do not assume it is OK to “pop” in to a neighbor’s place uninvited. Some neighbors become friends and friends may decide this is acceptable to do. Do not assume it upfront.

Not everyone wants or needs to know all your business. Keep casual conversations focused on general issues unless and until the neighbor gives you clues that he or she wants to develop more of a friendship.

If the neighbor gives you signals that they do not want a friendly relationship with you, respect that desire. But continue to be courteous and friendly to them.

If you have a neighbor that wants to be more friendly than you do, respectfully let them know that you want them to respect your privacy. Set limits, say now, but do both with courtesy.

Be helpful.

To the degree that you can, be helpful to others. For example, help the elderly neighbor carry her groceries. You never know when you might need help from one of your neighbors!

Respond to their concerns.

Remember that people have different backgrounds, needs, values, and comfort zones. If you want them to respect yours, you also need to respect theirs.

If a neighbor comes to you with a complaint or concern, listen to them fully and try to understand the situation from their point of view. Offer suggestions for things you can do to address their concern. Always look for “win-wins” and follow through! Agreeing to keep the TV quiet at night and then not doing so, only makes the problem bigger.

Deal with difficulties.

If you have a problem with a neighbor the first step is to politely talk with them about it and look for a solution that will work for both of you. Yelling at the neighbor about his noisy dog doesn’t do anyone any good. A good solution usually involves everyone giving a little bit in order to come to an agreeable solution.

If you have approached your neighbor about problems you have with them and they do not respond to your polite requests to respect those around them, try contacting the appropriate officials, such as the rent board or your landlord (if you share the same landlord).

If they still don't comply, consider calling the police if you think your neighbors are breaking the law with respect to you or your property.

Thinking about Housing Needs and Preferences

This form asks questions that are helpful to consider as you begin the process of changing your housing arrangements. Think about the questions for yourself and then talk them over with others.

Why Do You Want to Move?

These questions ask you to consider where you are now, what you like about it, why you are thinking about moving.

1. Where do you live now?

What do you like about where you live now?

For example: Neighborhood, Kind of housing (apartment, family home, condo); Living with people; Living alone; Availability of services and shops; Food and cleaning services provided

Why are you thinking about moving?

For example, People may move to live away from family; Get more space; Move away from problem housemates; Have more autonomy and responsibility; Live in a more attractive place; Find a safer neighborhood; Changes in accessibility needs; Changes in family size from marriage/divorce/births; Find a more affordable place; Get "sober" housing; graduating from a treatment or residential program; Health concerns.

What changes would you like to make in your living situation?

What do others (such as family, friends, and service providers) think about your moving? Do they support and encourage the idea? Discourage it? Why?

What Resources Do You Have To Help You Move?

These questions ask you to think about what resources you have to help you finance a new place. Just because you do not have all the money necessary doesn't mean you cannot move. It does mean that you and your supporters need to explore resources that might be available to help you out.

1. How much do you think you could afford to pay each month for rent and utilities?

Do you have some personal financial resources such as income from a job, Veteran's pension, or disability payment?

Do you have a guardian or payee who manages your money?

Do you think you need help in money management such as making sure the rent and utilities are paid and that you have money for emergencies? Do you know of community services or resources that could help you with this?

Are you eligible for housing subsidies and assistance, waivers? Do you know what kinds of financial assistance might be available to you?

Do you want/need help in finding, getting, keeping a living situation?

Do you have people who can help you find, get, keep a different living situation such as friends, family members, supportive service providers?

What extra help do think would be useful to you in the process?